Master Double-Crossers

GREAT TRUE SPY STORIES. Edited by Allen Dulles. 393 pp. A Giniger Book. New York: Harper & Row. $6.95.

By BURKE WILKINSON

HERE they all are, the celebrated spy stories of modern times, put into context by the old pro himself. An alternate title could be "A Saturation of Spies" — only it is perfectly clear, after reading two or three entries in a row, that this absorbing anthology is meant to be dipped into at will, not gulped.

In a more serious sense, Allen Dulles's collection is required reading for Espionage A, or whatever the relevant institutions call the first broad course in that delicate and many-sided art. Here are case histories, neatly divided into 10 categories. A sampling of the categories gives the range: Penetration, Networks, Counter-Espionage (Spy to Catch a Spy), Double Agents, Defection, Codes and Ciphers. As a bonus, the former director of the Central Intelligence Agency — himself one of the brilliant World War II operators — throws in three "Classic Instances of Espionage," so complex they defy categorizing.

Mr. Dulles's introductory remarks to each section are short, lucid and commonsensical. His definition of counter-espionage is a fair sample: "The essence of the work is a continuous vigilance and a knowledge of how hostile powers run their spies and what they are after. In closed societies the entire police mechanism is, in a sense, devoted to spy watching . . . In a free society counterespionage is based on the practice most useful for hunting rabbits. Rather than look for the rabbit one posts oneself in a spot where the rabbit is likely to pass by."

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All the way, you have the feeling that you are in the hands of an old-world maître d'hôtel, conjuring up dish after exotic dish. When Mr. Dulles calls Walter Schellenberg's account of some intricate doings along the Dutch border "a combined defection and penetration operation," you know exactly what you are being served, and your pleasure is no whit diminished.

The cold truth, the considerable accomplishment of this collection is less than the intent. Mr. Dulles has taken all history as his province. The earliest entry is Herodotus's account of the fall of Babylon by deception. A passage from Casanova shows the great lover spying on the British Fleet for the French, so fecklessly that it is clear his heart is elsewhere. There are three entries from our Revolution—and, surprisingly, none from the War Between the States.

The five scattered and rather arbitrary selections from earlier days add little. Modern times would have been enough to draw on, say since 1900. For it is in our own troubled century that the craft becomes fine art. Such a quibble is a little like complaining about a rickety chair at a banquet. For what a feast the 34 modern selections do make!

Here is "Cicero," valet extraordinary, whose perfect pipeline to British secrets was so imperfectly exploited in World War II. Told by L. C. Mozyisch, the German diplomat in Ankara who recruited him, this excerpt from the full book does not want for high excitement. Here is Klaus Fuchs, at whose treason the mind goes white. In Alan Moorehead's crystalline telling, the account of how Fuchs came to confess is perhaps the finest single entry. Almost as fine is Igor Gouzenko's story of his Canadian defection, holding as it does the clear promise that the frightened code clerk has the making of a novelist — if he lives to tell his tales.

Three women share literary laurels. To watch Barbara Tuchman decode the World War I Zimmerman Telegram in her faultless way, to play hide-and-seek with the haunted Field family in Flora Lewis's company (and share the pleasure of her mind and prose), to have Rebecca West unravel the intriguing mystery of a spy the Soviet wanted caught — here is bounty indeed. One quote from Dame Rebecca, describing her spy-in-hand, sets the high standard: "His swaying, fidgeting height shot up out of the witness box, like the rootless saplings that grow out of the crevices of bombed buildings."

Inevitably, some of the selections are too fragmentary. In the cases of the shadowy Sorge and of The Man Who Never Was, one simply wants more basting — more of what happened before and after the chosen excerpt. On the other hand, by infinite and skillful detail on the part of Thomas Whiteside, we have quite enough of Col. Stig Wennerstrom, the Swedish attaché who turned face and heart to the East.

Perhaps a better analogy than the banquet one is that this is a special museum exhibit, and Mr. Dulles custodian-guide. We linger where we please. We come back when we're in the mood. With such a guide and such a display, both average reader and serious student will find rich rewards.